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A
LETTER

TO THE
MAGISTRATES, BURGESSES, &c.

OF THE
ROYAL BURGHS

OF
SCOTLAND.

BY JOHN DONALDSON, ESQ.

London :

PRINTED, FOR THE AUTHOR,
AND SOLD BY J. MURRAY, N^o 32, FLEET STREET.

1793.

JUST PUBLISHED, BY THE SAME AUTHOR.

I.

MISCELLANEOUS PROPOSALS

FOR

Increasing our National Wealth

TWELVE MILLIONS A YEAR,

AND ALSO FOR

AUGMENTING THE REVENUE,

WITHOUT

A New Tax, or the further Extension of the Excise Laws,

[Price 11. 6d.]

II.

SKETCH

OF A

PLAN TO PREVENT CRIMES,

[Price 6d.]



TO THE
MAGISTRATES, BURGESSES, FREEMEN,
AND
OTHER WORTHY INHABITANTS

OF
The Royal Burghs of Scotland.

GENTLEMEN,

I TAKE the liberty of requesting your most serious attention to the annexed Memorial, and the Letters that passed between Sir James Stirling and myself, on the subject of it. If those Letters had been confidential ones, I should not have printed them; but having written to him as your Preses, when Lord Provost of Edinburgh, they are to be considered as official letters only.

In place of writing to the present worthy Lord Provost of Edinburgh, on the above subject, I think it may save time to apply directly to each Royal Burgh, as what I propose is of great national concern; and more particularly to the whole of the Royal Burghs, who besides partaking in the general welfare, will receive a share of the profits arising from the proposed business, as a permanent revenue, without the advance of any money.

I am certain I can shew how every man in the kingdom, that is industrious, may not only live comfortably, but make money; consequently may become a valuable member of society. Whoever has acquired property by honest industry, will not only support our present happy constitution, but will be ready to defend it with his life, as all he has got by labour will be in danger.

Where-ever trade and manufactures flourish, the people attend to those, and give themselves little trouble about state matters. By far the greatest number of those who went into the rebellions of 1715 and 1745, were from those parts of the country where manufactures were hardly known; and the people having little to do, were easily misled. It was otherwise in Edinburgh and Glasgow, both which places raised regiments for the defence of the country; and few people will now doubt, but if one Royal Burgh had been built in the Island of Lewes, and another in Lochaber, agreeable to the act of parliament of James the 6th, in 1597, there would have been no rebellions in Scotland, or emigrations from it; no good reason can be assigned why such burghs should not now be built. The Highlands and islands are capable of great improvement, and from my knowledge of many of the inhabitants, whom

whom I employed when I resided at Luncarty, I believe them to be sober, honest, industrious, docile, and much attached to their benefactors. If agriculture, fisheries, and manufactures, were introduced as they may be by my improved Plan, all would find full employment, live comfortably, and even acquire opulence.

It would be prejudicial to the interest of the Royal Burghs, as well as mine, to have the particulars of the Plans disclosed, before we have parliamentary security to share the profits with government. There is no class of people but what will be benefited by those Plans, and the ministers and schoolmasters over the whole country, who hitherto have received no advantage by the former improvements, will have an addition to their present incomes, when those Plans are adopted; and I am happy to think, that the success of this business depends in a great measure on yourselves; when I consider that you send fifteen members to parliament, I am confident you may have every thing you can reasonably ask, and what I wish you to solicit is only to have a share with government, of the profits to arise from the introduction of some New Branches of Manufactures, &c. and from some improvements in the agriculture, fisheries, &c. to be carried on by you and myself, under the name of

“ The Royal Burgh Company : ” so reasonable a request will not be denied to so respectable a body as the Royal Burghs, who have greater parliamentary interest than any other corporate body whatever; besides, charters and acts of parliament are frequently granted to towns, companies, and even to individuals, though government does not share in the profits, but in this proposal they are to partake. Perhaps a royal charter may answer in place of an act of parliament, and that you may obtain at any time, when it is understood that commerce, manufactures, industry, and I can add, good morals, are its sole objects; not only his majesty’s ministers, but your own members will rejoice in rendering so essential a service to the kingdom, as England and Wales will also reap many advantages from this proposed company; every ingenious person, whether natives or foreigners, that has any thing of public utility to propose, will be assisted by the Royal Burgh Company, as will evidently appear when my Plans are published and fully explained. It will then be evident, that though my Plans are very extensive, yet such parts as are most approved may be first put in execution without prejudice to the other parts. To say every thing that ought to be said on this business, would far exceed the bounds of a letter. I must therefore

fore beg your attention to the printed Proposals and Sketch of a Plan to prevent Crimes, both sold by Mr. Murray, No. 32, Fleet Street, London. You will find me ready to communicate what more is necessary, either to yourselves or such gentlemen as you may think proper to appoint, to advise with me; being fully convinced I can satisfy them; that what I propose is the most beneficial offer that has ever been made not to you only, but also to the country; and I desire no other reward but a share of the profits that may arise from the execution of my Plans.

I shall be happy to receive your early answer to this Proposal, addressed to me, No. 31, Haymarket, London; and as there may be a great number of letters on this business, I hope it will apologize for my requesting that they may come free of expence. I am, respectfully,

Gentlemen,

Your most obedient, and
devoted servant,

London, 17 June, 1793.

JOHN DONALDSON.

*To the Honourable the General Convention of
the Royal Burghs of Scotland, the humble
Memorial of John Donaldson, Esq.*

SHEWETH,

THAT I your Memorialist have with great expence, and after many years study and labour, found out, and invented several Plans which tend greatly to advance the public good, a sketch of which plans you will find in my printed proposalls herewith delivered, and to which I beg leave to refer you : though I do not therein communicate the manner in which those Plans are to be carried on, yet you will see that I am willing to lay the whole open, upon being secured that no advantage will be taken of such information without my consent ; and as I have the honour of being a Burgess and Guild-brother in several places, I apply to you, Gentlemen, and brother Burgesses, for your assistance in bringing forward Plans of so great and so general advantage. The chief purport of this Memorial is mentioned in the 53d page of my proposals.

Improvements are slow and progressive, being generally carried on by the individual inventors who have the prejudices of mankind to combat with ; I well know what difficulties my father met with in the linen trade, who had only one scheme to bring forward ; and here I have many, and
in

in the evening of life, I cannot hope to receive much pecuniary advantage from them. But I trust to be able to lay before the public, a method how all my proposals may be directly brought forward and be productive in a much shorter time than if carried on by individuals, or even by companies, according to the present forms.

My wish, by the present Memorial is, that the Royal Burghs should participate with government in the profits resulting from my Plans, when put in execution; and therefore I apply, Gentlemen, to you, to solicit an Act of Parliament, securing to yourselves and to me a share of those profits upon such parts as they are pleased to adopt.

It is impossible to form any just idea of my Plans until they are printed and fully explained, and even then it will take as much time to comprehend the whole as for a person to learn navigation, or any art or science that is taught by books; yet all who read them with attention, will see that they should be immediately gone into, the certainty of success being so evident; I mean also to shew, that the present contest about a reform in the internal government of the Royal Burghs may be amicably settled to the satisfaction of all parties.

There will be no call on you for money
to

to carry on these Plans ; on the contrary, they will yield an income to the Royal Burghs, besides promoting the agriculture, fisheries, manufactories, and trade of the country.

Your Memorialist humbly hopes, the Honourable Convention of Royal Burghs will take this Memorial into consideration, and grant such aid to your Memorialist as to them shall seem meet, and your Memorialist shall ever pray, &c.

London, 17th June, 1791.

JOHN DONALDSON.

London, 22d June, 1792.

MY LORD,

I did myself the honour to write your lordship the 17th June, 1791, to which I have not been favoured with any answer: your lordship may have good reasons for not presenting my Memorial to the General Convention of Royal Burghs, but they are unknown to me. One thing I know, that had that Memorial been presented and properly considered, the present contest about a reform in the internal government of the Royal Burghs would have been amicably settled with harmony and peace ; in place of which, I was sorry to see by the Papers, there were such dangerous riots, and your lordship was

was a sufferer by it. Being confident that my Plan will be of the utmost service to the whole country, I must request your lordship will let me know whether or not you will do me the honour to present the Memorial at the first meeting. I must not let this season pass, especially as much has been said in Parliament in favour of my Plan to prevent crimes, and part of it is put into the New Police Act.

I have the honour to be, with great respect,

My LORD,

Your Lordship's most obedient,
and most humble servant,

JOHN DONALDSON.

The Right Honourable
the Lord Provost of
Edinburgh.

Edinburgh, 25th June, 1792.

SIR,

While just setting out for the country for a few days, I received your letter of the 22d current, reflecting on me for not presenting your Memorial last year to the General Convention of Royal Burghs, which, should it have been attended with effects you mention, is certainly an omission much to be regreted; the reason I do not now exactly recollect, but if still very solicitous, and if you will transmit

transmit me a copy with a written requisition, I shall surely have it presented at the meeting next month. In the mean time, I remain,

SIR,

Your most obedient servant,

JAMES STIRLING,
Provost.

John Donaldson, Esq.

London, 4th July, 1792.

MY LORD,

Agreeable to your lordship's desire, have inclosed another copy of my Memorial to be presented to the General Convention of the Royal Burghs, with my printed proposals, to which it refers; I hope your lordship will also do me the honour to acquaint them, that if my proposals are gone into, they will receive several thousands a-year, besides answering the other benevolent purposes mentioned.

The business is intended to be carried on by Managers in Edinburgh (see page 47) who will have the conducting the whole of it by means of agents through the country, in some degree like the honourable board of trustees for manufactures, &c. who appoint their own officers and stamp masters, in the places they think best; this board was only established by patent, in 1727, and my father had the honour

honour of being one of the projectors of it, and the stamp masters (entirely a plan of his own): all the people connected with the trustees, hold their places independent of government, and yet they have no better friends. Business carried on in this way becomes popular, but it is not so in the different branches of revenue; besides, government, when they give a friend an office, they are deprived of their further services.

In all countries and at all times, any thing new, is objected to as impossible. In Queen Elizabeth's reign, it was proposed to encourage the cultivation of wheat; Mr. Secretary Cecil said, that God and nature had ordained that England should be a grasing country, and we ought to be satisfied, and continue to import our wheat from the Baltic.

The present age have had so many proofs of the utility of new inventions and improvements, that I hope they will be ready to encourage all schemes that tend to the public advantage, by giving them a candid hearing, and making a fair trial.

I have the honour to be,

with great respect,

My LORD,

Your Lordship's most obedient,
and most humble servant,

JOHN DONALDSON.

The Right Hon. the Lord Provost of Edinburgh.

MY LORD,

London, 3d August, 1792.

I had the honour of writing your lordship, the 4th of July last, with a second copy of my Memorial to be presented to the General Convention of Royal Burghs; as the meeting is now over, I take the liberty to request your lordship will do me the honour to let me know what they have done in it.

I have the honour to be, with great respect, My LORD,

Your Lordship's most obedient,
and most humble servant,

JOHN DONALDSON,

The Right Hon. the Lord Provost of Edinburgh.

SIR,

London, 22d March, 1793.

I had the honour of writing you the 3d of August last, to which have not been favoured with any answer.

I trust you presented my Memorial to the General Convention of Royal Burghs, agreeable to your promise, and again request to know what has been done concerning said Memorial; as I must now endeavour to make further application to the Royal Burghs on this interesting business.

In November last, I printed a Sketch of a Plan to prevent Crimes, (price 6d. sold by Mr. Murray, No. 32, Fleet Street) and also shewed how the New Police Act
has

has been benefited by my communications. If necessary, I can produce proofs of the public being much benefited by my labours and communications, for which I have not received one penny of public money.

[The remainder of this letter is not necessary to be inserted, being only concerning my Patent Candles, made and sold now by Mr. Brecknell, No. 31, Haymarket.]

I have the honour to be, with great respect, Sir,

Your most obedient, and most
humble servant,

JOHN DONALDSON.

Sir James Stirling, Bart.

SIR,

Edinb. 26 March, 1793.

I was yesterday favoured with your letter of the 22d. The Memorial you mention, I received, and presented as you desired, to the Committee of Royal Burghs, last year; what, or whether they did any thing in consequence, I do not now recollect; but Mr. John Gray, their clerk, is at present in London—if you will take the trouble to apply to him, he may be able to give you some information. I am, Sir,

Your most obedient servant,

JAMES STIRLING,

John Donaldson, Esq.

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has been paid by my committee.
I have not received one penny of public
money.



I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 22nd inst. and in reply to inform you that the same has been forwarded to the proper authorities for their consideration.

Yours most obedient and most
humble servant,
John Donaldson.
St. James's Palace, London.

I was yesterday favoured with your letter of the 22nd. The Memorial you mention, I received, and presented as you desired, to the Committee of Royal Burgesses last year; what or whether they did any thing in consequence, I do not now recollect; but Mr. John Gray, their clerk, is at present in London—if you will take the trouble to apply to him, he may be able to give you some information. I am, Sir,
Your most obedient servant,

JAMES STIRLING.
John Donaldson, Esq.